

Tale Feathers

September
2005

Volume 72
Number 6

St. Louis Audubon Open House

Tuesday, September 20, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.
Powder Valley Nature Center Auditorium

New member or life-long, bring yourself and bring a friend and find out just what we've been up to lately.

Yes, as most people know, we're big on birds. But what does that **really** mean, and is there more? Did you know that during the 2004/2005 school year, our volunteers presented educational programs to nearly 2,000 students, or that we offer programs as diverse as birds and bats, owls and rivers? Come hear, see, and feel just what we're all about—from field trips, to bird monitoring, to classroom programs, to conservation advocacy, and much, much more. Meet the people that make it happen and find out if there's something interesting for you. Bring along that friend or relative that looks at you sideways when you say, "Audubon." Whether you're new, been around for years, or haven't even joined, we guarantee you'll learn **something** new about St. Louis Audubon!

Refreshments will be available, and door prizes, too!!
From the intersection of Interstates 44 & 270, take Watson Rd. to Geyer Rd. Turn north on Geyer for 200 yards to Cragwold Road. Go west on Cragwold for 1 mi. to nature center entrance on right. Follow drive to parking lot. Enter building through left entrance. Questions, call Cathy Devine at 314-962-3460 or Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

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St. Louis Audubon Society

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Mission Statement
of
The St. Louis
Audubon Society

Help our community
sustain biological
Diversity through
Nature.

Goals
To foster an aware-
ness and under-
standing
Of birds and other
wildlife and their
habitats

To educate our com-
munity so people
can make
Informed decisions
about the natural
world.

ASM Fall Weekend September 23-25 at Camp Clover Point

The Audubon Society of Missouri, the state's ornithological society since 1901, is having its annual fall meeting September 23 – 25 at Camp Clover Point at Lake of the Ozarks State Park. The weekend features birding field trips led by members of the Missouri Bird Records Committee, a bird ID workshop led by Bill Rowe, and all-around fun fellowship with birders from around the state. For more info, see the ASM website www.mobirds.org or contact ASM President, Sue Gustafson, at 314-968-8128.

The Fifth Annual Driftwood Wildlife Association "A SWIFT NIGHT OUT".

As summer draws to a close and the swifts have finished raising their young, these fascinating aerial acrobats begin to congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of a half a dozen birds or so, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts! We encourage you to involve your local Audubon chapters, bird clubs, scout groups and neighbors in this exhilarating spectacle.

Here is how it works: Keep your eyes to the skies at dusk and watch for areas where swifts are feeding. Look for a tall shaft, chimney or similar structure to locate where Chimney Swifts (central to east coast or Vaux's Swift (Pacific coast) go to roost in your area.

On one night over the weekend of August 12, 13, 14, and / or September 9, 10, 11 observe the roost starting about 30 minutes before dusk and estimate the number of swifts that enter. When you have your number, contact us with your results. That's all there is to it!

For more information and results, please visit our web site:

www.chimneyswifts.org and click on the "Swift Night Out" link.

Audubon Missouri Annual Meeting September 10, 2005

Audubon Missouri, the State Office of the National Audubon Society, will hold its annual meeting September 10, 2005 in Jefferson City. The meeting will focus on methods of distribution of the collaborative fund distribution from National Audubon Society, as well as education, conservation and public policy workshops. The Department of Natural Resources building in Jefferson City was selected for the specific meeting site because the building was designed and built according to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. If you are interested in attending, please contact Katy Burkett at the State Office at 1573-447-2249.

Birding Trips: September- October

John Solodar

September 10, Saturday. Tower Grove Park -

Join Nick Barber in a search for fall migrants in Tower Grove Park starting at 8:00 AM. Lots of birds should be coming through by this date. We'll meet just east of the Gaddy Bird Garden.

September 24, Saturday - Carlyle Lake Pelagic.

Once again we head to Carlyle Lake for this all day, three-part trip. We will meet at 7:30 AM in the McDonald's parking lot in the town of Carlyle, IL. Land birds and some waterfowl will be in order in the morning. We will be on the lake for Sabine's and other Gulls and possibly some Phalaropes at mid-day. (Reservations are required for the boat trip which will cost approximately \$25.00 per person.) We will finish at parking lot # 3 and search for shorebirds. Sometimes the group has met for dinner at the end. Josh Uffman is the trip leader. Joe Eades is coordinating reservations for the boat trip. Contact him by e-mail at joseph.w.eades@monsanto.com.

October 1, Saturday - Riverlands, Ellis Island Big

Sit - Big sits are becoming a popular alternative to the hectic Big Day activity. Joe Eades anticipates that the tip of Ellis Island will be an excellent place for sitting in one place and seeing what comes by. At this time of year in the past Ellis Bay has produced Sabine's Gulls and even one Little Gull plus lots of other interesting birds. We'll arrange for some cars to drive all the way out to the point (the parking area there is fairly small) to make it easier. Others can hike out from the Ellis Island parking lot and do some good birding along the way. We'll meet at 8:00 AM at Teal Pond and then drive over to Ellis Island or car pool if there are more cars than the Ellis Island parking lot can handle. Bring lunch if you plan to stay a long time, water and a scope if you have one.

October 15, Saturday - Two Rivers NWR,

Riverlands, Jones Confluence Park - Pat Lueders will lead this trip starting at 8:00 AM at the Gilbert Lake access of Two Rivers NWR. After birding the Gilbert Lake area the group will take the ferry to Calhoun County to visit the refuge headquarters, the pump station, the volcano, etc. Those who want to go for a longer trip will go on to Riverlands and the Jones Confluence Park on the Missouri side. Lunch will probably be at the Two Rivers HQ building.

How to get there

Tower Grove Park (Gaddy Bird Garden)- I-44 or I-64 (Highway 40) to south Kingshighway. From I-64 go about 1 mile to left on Magnolia. Park on street; walk to the east side of the brushy area (Gaddy Bird Garden) at the northwest corner of the park.

Carlyle Lake - Take I-64 east across the Poplar Street Bridge. Exit I-64 at Hwy 50 East (toward Carlyle). Follow Hwy 54 to Hwy 127 and turn left at the junction. Turn right into McDonalds. Meet in the parking lot.

Riverlands - Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. The designation changes to Hwy 67 just beyond the 4th traffic light, but continue. Turn right on last road just before the Clark Bridge at the Mississippi River. (Fisca gas station at this turn.) Turn right on the first road and park in the Teal Pond parking lot.

Twin Rivers Nat Wildlife Area Gilbert Lake Access - From the intersection of I-270 and Hwy 367 on the northern loop of I-270, follow Hwy 367 then Hwy 67 north as if going to Riverlands, but go over the Clark Bridge into Alton IL. Go left on Route 143 at the end of the bridge and left again at the intersection with Route 100. Follow Route 100 upriver through Grafton. Just north of the Brussels Ferry landing on the left side of the road is a sign for the Gilbert Lake area. There is a parking lot just inside the gate.

So it goes:

Dave Rogles

You are standing on the mountain trail, looking at Zone-tailed hawks across the valley, and there, at your knees, is a white-eared hummingbird, feeding on an agave. In a few minutes the white-eared leaves and a Lucifer hummingbird starts feeding. Three good bird-lifers for some, in five minutes.

A group of St. Louis birders visited West Texas in mid-July, staying in the Guadalupe, Chisos and Davis mountains. We saw a total of 161 bird species, including rarities such as buff-breasted flycatcher, black-capped vireo, crissal thrasher, gray flycatcher and gray vireo.

We spent four days in the Chisos Mountains at Big Bend National Park. Big Bend is 800,000 acres and in 4 days we only scouted its potential. The hike to Boot Springs (ten miles roundtrip) on the first day yielded Colima Warbler, a Texas endemic. It was on this hike that we had the special five minutes that forgave the aching muscles and sore feet. We stayed at Chisos Lodge, in Chisos Basin, about 5500 feet elevation, and had daily views of the desert below through the "window" in the mountains. Though it was 100 degrees in the desert, we were comfortable most days, high enough that the temperatures were pleasant for modest activity.

This is desolate but lovely land and requires planning to visit, as gas stations are few, water is hard to come by, and the desert is unforgiving. The blooming flowers, the butterflies and the birds, all brought to the sky island by its unique habitats, make the trip worthwhile.

Sources to check out on-line:

www.nps.gov/bibe/

www.visitbigbend.com

www.nps.gov/gumo/ Guadalupe Mountains

St. Louis Audubon Participates in Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Conference

— Sue Gustafson

St. Louis Audubon Society participated in the 3rd annual conference of the Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative (MoBCI) held August 26-27 in Columbia, MO. MoBCI is an "organization of organizations", and St. Louis Audubon is one of 32 organizational members who have united for the purpose of conserving Missouri's birds. Presentations included using land type association modeling for landscape level planning, how the state comprehensive wildlife strategy will be used to guide the future of wildlife management in Missouri, and how the future of successful conservation will depend on the collective effort of all member organizations and their wide ranging philosophies.

The afternoon session featured presentations on partner projects which have received MoBCI grant funding. I made a presentation on the Creve Coeur County Park marsh expansion project in which St. Louis Audubon received \$17,500 in grant money to assist in our partner project with St. Louis County and the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service (one of our projects of the St. Louis Urban Bird Conservation Treaty Program). This project will assist in adding marsh habitat to the area south of the current marsh, including the former athletic field complex, which will eventually be converted into a wetlands complex.

Linda Tossing continues to represent St. Louis Audubon on the MoBCI Steering Committee. The MoBCI conference was well attended by a wide variety of groups and individuals interested in "all-bird" conservation. It has been very rewarding to sit down at the table with groups such as Ducks Unlimited, the Ruffed Grouse Society, and the Wild Turkey Federation, and although we have different primary activities, we all have a common goal of preserving and enhancing habitat to increase bird populations.

THE GOOD HUMMERS

We visit good friends who live on Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga. They have been feeding big groups of hummingbirds for years and have made personal observations. Here they are:

We have been living on top of Lookout Mountain in Northwest Georgia for seven years and have enjoyed the company of ruby throated hummingbirds during part of the year. Their behavior around our hummingbird feeder has intrigued us and, over the years we have become aware of a definite pattern.

This is what we have observed. The hummingbirds migrate back to our area in early April and, by repeatedly flying in front of us, alert us to the need of setting up our hummingbird feeder. They are thin and at that time feeding seems to be a very serious business; no playing around. They feed frequently and intently for a few weeks and we can see them slowly gaining weight. Then sometimes in early May they stop coming to the feeder; maybe they are feeding on flowers which are abundant at this time of the year or maybe they are nesting? maybe both? we don't know.

Sometimes in late June they come back to our feeder and there are more of them. We can see that a few of them are mature hummingbirds but the others are thinner and very playful. We guess they are the youngsters. These youngsters spend a lot of time feeding and playing around the feeder. They buzz, dive and rise in the sky at incredible speeds. They have play fights and are continually communicating. It seems as if they are having a lot of fun while at the same time feeding a lot and gaining weight. In August a strange thing starts happening. During the day one adult male will position himself on a branch by the feeder and will aggressively chase the youngsters away and prevent them from feeding at the feeder. This behavior lasts several weeks until, around the middle of September, the youngsters are allowed once again free access to the feeder. They usually start their migration two to three weeks later.

Our interpretation is that, when the youngsters are old enough, the mature male restricts their access to our feeder in order to teach them to rely on other food sources. Two to three weeks before the start of migration, they are once again allowed to feed at the feeder in order to gain weight fast and build up the reserve of energy necessary for the long migration south.
(from Micheline Rothman)

Education Committee Update

Sharon Nickl

Our committee has not been totally without work this summer. We did two programs(one on butterflies & one on birds) for the Green Center and three for Rockwood Summer School Adventure Clubs(mammals, butterflies and backyard finds), and we also did a butterfly program for the Corps of Engineers at the Alton River Museum.

We will be having a display table at the Indian PowWow to be held at Meramec Comm. College on Saturday, August 13. We will be having another display table at the City of Wildwood 10th Anniversary Celebration at Babler State Park on Sept. 17.

We already have one school program request for January, a program for the City of Chesterfield in October, one for a south county garden club coming up in September, and two for an assisted living center in South County in September.

We hope to add a new member to our committee by October. Anyone else interested in our committee, we will be offering a training program day in October or November, so come and take a look at what we do and see if you would be interested in joining us.

Contact Sharon Nickl for more information.

St. Louis Audubon Goes to Camp on Hog Island

Sharon Nickl

Five members of the St. Louis Audubon, Nancy Clark, Vicki Flier, Sharon Nickl, Roberta (Bobbi) Poor and David Tylka, attended camp on Hog Island near Bremen, Maine from 7/10-7/15/05. We studied Seabirds, Lobsters and Tides which might not have sounded of interest to our group, but we found that to be completely untrue.

Every morning (6:15) was an impromptu bird walk for any early risers who wanted to participate. Some days we had a morning & an afternoon program and on others it was an all-day program. We did *algae pressing* and learned about the local algae. We took a boat ride and learned about Hog Island on which the camp is located, the local area and some of the local birds, both sea and land. We also saw a harbor porpoise and seals. That evening, we were entertained with a talk from Steve Kress, the man who reintroduced puffins to some of the islands off the coast of Maine after their absence of over a hundred years. (*Editor's note: Log onto www.projectpuffin.org to view these birds*).

One evening we had a talk on butterflies by expert, Mark Garland, who was visiting on the island for a few days. An instructor came in for a session to teach us all about lobsters and then that evening we had a lady from the Lobster Conservancy come and talk to us in detail about what is being done to conserve lobsters now and insure them for the future. We spent some time being instructed about Tides by Steve Berkowitz, a professor at Coastal University in Carolina. Another day was spent at the tidal basin discovering sea life there.

On Wednesday we had an all day trip. They loaded us into the Puffin III, their biggest boat, and took us out to Eastern Egg Rock for a closer look at the puffins and some other seabirds. The island is off-limits to all except those working on "Project Puffin"—these people are monitoring the birds very closely to make sure that all is going well. Then lunch on Harbor Island which is privately owned, but with an agreement between Audubon and the owner, Audubon is allowed to bring groups to the island for exploration walks and lunch. Audubon also maintains a small area on one point of the island for the landowner who lives there on a part-time basis. That night our speaker was a man who photographed the Appalachian Trail from a Piper cub.

The next day we went to Rockland, Maine, the home of the Farnsworth Museum which houses many works of art by the Wyeth family and many other Maine painters. Thursday night our speaker was a young man, Daniel Breton, brother to one of the chief volunteers on the puffin project, who decided to try making a nature documentary film on puffins. Friday was our final day, and we spent it walking. First we took a walk through a big section of the island called the "spruce woods" and stopped at the cabin owned by the family of Millicent Todd Bingham, the lady who saved and published the works of Emily Dickinson. Mrs. Bingham is the same lady who saved the island and deeded it to Audubon. The cabin has been left "as was". It is in dire need of repairs but at this time, there are no funds to do the restoration work needed. Then in the afternoon, we went to the mainland and did a bird walk in the local area with one of the instructors, Tom Leckey, on the roads where Roger Tory Peterson once walked. We saw lots of birds we do not have here, but we also saw some that were very familiar to us.

The food is outstanding—not what I would call camp food. The chef, Yanni, and he really is a chef—not just a cook—uses no recipes and no frying pans. It appeared that most everything he made was baked. We had fresh-made bread every morning for breakfast, home-made granola, bowls of fresh fruit, muffins or cinnamon rolls and always something extra. We also had fresh baked cookies every afternoon. The final night was the lobster boil and if you could hold two lobsters (just ask Dave), you could have them.

Everyone who goes there seems to fall in love with the place—the scenery is outstanding and even the noise of the lobster boats going out at 4:00am seems just to add something. The camp has a famous quote: "*if once you have lived on an island, you'll never be quite the same.*" I can only say, if you get a chance to go to the camp, take it, you'll never be sorry.

Sharon Nickl

VP/Education

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Torrey Berger

It's that time of year when (despite the heat wave) "Fall" migration is beginning for some of our feathered friends and SLAs is kicking off our 2005-06 schedule of birding field trips. Between now and the end of June, 2006, our Field Trip Committee will have over 25 outings to more than 20 birding hot-spots in the St. Louis area, all of them free and open to the public.

This is a great opportunity to see a variety of birds. Let me list a few other reasons why you should consider joining us on these excursions:

1. They are a pleasing social event with great company in attendance.
2. You will learn where all the birding hot-spots are located so you will be able to plan more productive trips on your own.
3. Group birding will always produce greater number than individual just because more eyes are more birds.
4. For me, personally, birding trips are not only a scientific, but a spiritual exercise of great benefit.

From the SLAS prospective, the real reason for the Field Trip Programs rests on the first step of our Mission, which is to EDUCATE with respect to the natural world and its preservation. As I have mentioned before (per Roger Tory Petersen): ***If you make someone a birder, you will make them a conservationist.***

So, that leads me to the question of who should go on our Field Trips? There are two basic rules for any SLAS Field Trip:

1. We will try to have every participant see every bird, and
2. The most important participant is the newest birder.

Based upon these rules, we need you experienced birders with sporting and identification skills. We need beginning birders who can be the experienced guides of tomorrow. But most importantly, we need that friend of yours (member or not) who has expressed an interest, although he or she may never have been birding before. We all need to pick a date and invite these folks to come along.

Come and join us. Bring a friend. I will guarantee you will have a great time, see some great birds and at the same time, you will be advancing the SLAS mission in a meaningful way. It sure beats standing at the Mall signing up petitions. For information of questions with regard to Field trips, see the most current issue of Tail Feathers or contact John Solodar at 314-862-5994, e-mail solodar1@mindspring.com.

Tale Feathers

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St. Louis Audubon Society 2004 - 2005

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As a joint member with National Audubon, you will receive National Audubon's quarterly magazine (Audubon) as well as St. Louis Audubon Society's Newsletter (Tale Feathers). Now you also have the opportunity to join only the St. Louis Audubon Society, receive Tale Feathers, and participate in the educational and conservation activities of St. Louis Audubon. There is no distinction between individual and family membership. Dues cover all members at the same address. For information, call (314) 822-6595.

Use this form to join St. Louis Audubon / National Audubon

For joint membership in St. Louis Audubon Society and National Audubon Society, Make checks payable to **National Audubon Society** and mail to St. Louis Audubon Society, P.O.Box 220227, Kirkwood, MO. 63122

_____Membership/\$35 For renewal in the National Audubon Society, we recommend that you use the forms supplied by National Audubon. For more information, contact Anne Rankin Horton at 636-256-3402.

_____Introductory Membership / \$20 _____Special Two -Year Introductory Membership / \$30

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